News release

Met Office winter forecast 2006/7

21 September 2006

Prospects for this coming winter are finely balanced, long-range forecasters at the Met Office are saying today, partly due to El Niño conditions becoming established in the Pacific Ocean.

There has been a shift from the early signal, issued by the Met Office in July, which suggested the winter would be milder than average and wetter than last year. The long-range forecast for Winter 2006/7 across the UK, now released, indicates near-average temperatures and an approximately even chance of wetter or drier-than-average conditions for the season as a whole.

El Niño conditions are becoming established in the Pacific Ocean and this is helping to produce a winter forecast that is in the balance. Significantly, these developing influences could shift probabilities to favour a colder outlook, particularly for late Winter 2006/7.

Rob Varley, Head of the Public Weather Service at the Met Office commented: "In July, we issued a first assessment of the winter. This was based on the North Atlantic Oscillation (NAO) technique and indicated a mild winter. However, from September, other forecast data becomes available, allowing us to make a further expert judgement on how the winter is likely to play out. It's interesting to note that the chances of a colder winter have increased slightly in light of recent information, with a focus on the late-winter period. We will track this possible trend and update the forecast in coming months as necessary."

Notes to editors: El Niño is a warming in the tropical Pacific Ocean which accompanies a reversal in the trade winds. It affects the weather and climate across many parts of the globe and is the largest climatic event that occurs on a regular basis anywhere on the planet.

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